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Economic and Social Council

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**Statistical Commission**
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Item 4 (o) of the provisional agenda*
**Items for information: follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions**

# Policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

## Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-eighth session,** the present note is submitted to brief the Commission on policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2007 that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission. The note, furthermore, indicates the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division, in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Council. The Commission is invited to take note of the brief contained herein.

## I. Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

### A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

1. In its resolution 2007/29, on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16, the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed the need to continue to strengthen the Council as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination and thus promote the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Assembly resolutions, in particular

* E/CN.3/2008/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2007, Supplement No. 4* (E/2007/24) chap. I.A.

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resolutions 50/227, 57/270B and 61/16. The Council noted the completion of the review of their working methods by the functional commissions and other relevant bodies of the Council and also noted the decision by some of the subsidiary bodies to continue to review their methods of work, as mandated in Assembly resolution 57/270 B.

2. In its resolution 2007/29, the Council also recognized the need to further enhance coordination and cooperation between the Council and its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies so as to allow the Council to carry out more effectively its crucial role as the central mechanism for systemwide coordination, while reiterating that, when mandated, the functional commissions should continue to have the primary responsibility for the review and assessment of progress made in implementing the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields; and it requested the functional commissions, the regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies of the Council to continue contributing, as appropriate, and in accordance with their respective mandates, to the work of the Council in line with relevant General Assembly resolutions, in particular Assembly resolutions 57/270 B and 61/16.

## B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

### Meeting of the chairpersons of the functional commissions with the Economic and Social Council

3. The meetings of the chairpersons of the functional commissions with the Council and its Bureau serve to exchange relevant information among the subsidiary bodies and to intensify cooperation with the Council. Two such meetings were held in 2007. The first meeting with the Bureau, held on 15 January 2007 in New York, replaced the previous regular joint bureaux meetings. The Chairman of the Statistical Commission participated in the meeting via video link. On 10 July 2007, the Council held a dialogue with the chairpersons of the functional commissions on the topic "Working together to promote the goals of decent work and full employment for all". A presentation was made by the representative of Mexico, on behalf of the Chairman of the Statistical Commission. The next meeting of the chairpersons of the functional commissions with the Bureau will be held on 29 January 2008.

### Development indicators

4. Ever since the Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (see Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27), the Commission has been discussing the technical aspects of development indicators on a continuous basis.

5. At its thirty-ninth session, the Commission is considering a report of the Secretary-General on indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2008/29) and a report of the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme on Statistics of human development (E/CN.3/2008/11).

**Methods of work**

6. The Statistical Commission, like the rest of the functional commissions, had reported to the Council the completion of the review of its methods of work in 2005.[1] In particular, the Commission had addressed the issue of more efficient time management. It had also put in place a mechanism to ensure the continuity of its Bureau and cooperation with the Council, including through a standing agenda item on Council decisions. The Commission also enhanced its official programme through panel discussions and other side events during its thirty-eighth session and sixtieth anniversary with multi-stakeholder participation. The Commission has found the procedures satisfactory and it intends to continue to implement and refine them in its thirty-ninth session. In particular, the Bureau has a continued mandate to streamline the agenda.[2]

# II. Reform of the Economic and Social Council

## A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

7. In its resolution 61/16, on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly reaffirmed the role that the Charter of the United Nations and the Assembly had vested in the Economic and Social Council and recognized the need for a more effective Council as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations conferences and summits; also reaffirmed the commitments to enhance the momentum generated by the 2005 World Summit in order to operationalize and implement, at all levels, the commitments in the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the 2005 World Summit, in the economic, social and related fields; decided that the Council should hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews as part of the high-level segment; and requested the Council to urge the functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies and follow-up mechanisms, as appropriate, to contribute, in accordance with their mandates and taking into account their specificity, to the assessment by the Economic and Social Council.

8. The Council adopted its first multi-year work programme for the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews in October 2007. The 2008 review will focus on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development"; and the 2009 review will focus on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health". The substantive contributions of the Council's functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential for the success of the reviews.

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[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 4* (E/2005/24), chap. II, para. 5.

[2] Ibid., *2007, Supplement No. 4* (E/2007/24), chap. V, para. 3.

### B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

9. The Commission continuously works on all statistical subject-matter areas to improve the availability and quality of baseline statistics. For instance, the items of the provisional agenda of its thirty-ninth session, on health statistics, environmental statistics, environmental accounting (items 4 (a), (j) and (k)), are related to the themes of the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews for 2008 and 2009. Furthermore, as mentioned above (paras. 4 and 5) the Commission is the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system and accordingly guides the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators, which could feed into the preparation of the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews.

## III. Mainstreaming gender perspectives

### A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

10. In its resolution 2007/33, the Council, reaffirmed its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system; recalled its resolutions 2001/41, 2002/23, 2003/49, 2004/4, 2005/31 and 2006/36; reaffirmed also the commitment made at the 2005 World Summit; and took note with appreciation of the progress and continued efforts made by United Nations entities to address gaps between policy and practice in mainstreaming a gender perspective in their respective fields of work, including through the development of training, methodologies and tools, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2007/64).

11. In 2007, the General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women" (resolution 62/133). In the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to develop and propose a set of possible indicators on violence against women, building on the work undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in order to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women, with a view to allowing its consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-second session and by the Statistical Commission at the earliest.

### B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

12. In March 2007, the Statistical Commission held a joint panel discussion with the Commission on the Status of Women on the latter's priority theme for 2007 entitled "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The panel discussion, which was part of the interactions between individual functional commissions, was very well received (see A/62/89-E/2007/76).

13. The Economic Commission for Europe, the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for

Western Asia, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the Economic Commission for Africa, convened a group of experts in Geneva, from 8 to 10 October 2007, hosted by the Conference of European Statisticians Task Force on violence against women, in order to initiate a discussion on possible indicators on violence against women. Country experts participated in the debate. The results of this effort will be discussed at a joint panel meeting between the Statistical Commission and the Commission on the Status of Women in February 2008. The work of the expert group will also feed into a substantive report on gender statistics to be prepared for the consideration of the Statistical Commission in 2009.

14. The National Institute of Statistics of Italy and the entities of the United Nations system (the Statistics Division, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Population Fund and the Economic Commission for Europe), in collaboration with the World Bank, organized a global forum on gender statistics in Rome from 10 to 12 December 2007. The forum was attended by users and producers of gender statistics and served as a platform for the launch of a global programme to further develop and improve gender statistics.

# IV. Follow-up to Council resolutions on strengthening national capacity in statistics and on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

## A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

15. Upon the initiative of the Statistical Commission, the Council adopted two resolutions in the past two years, one on strengthening national capacity in statistics (2006/6) and the other on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme (2005/13), in which it requested an intensification of efforts to support national statistical programmes in strengthening their capacity, in the context of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census round and beyond.

## B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

16. The Commission is considering specific follow-up actions to those two resolutions under its agenda items 4 (b) on "Population and housing censuses"; 4 (l) on "Coordination and integration of statistical programmes"; and 4 (n) on "Development indicators". The documentation presented under these items describes in detail activities undertaken by the Statistics Division and by its partner agencies in supporting the 2010 World Population and Housing Census round to improve the coordination of technical cooperation activities and to improve the availability and quality of development indicators.